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Mexico Holds Out For Link to Cuba

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Brazil's severance of relations with Premier Fidel Castro's Cuba leaves Mexico as the only major holdout in Latin America's diplomatic disenchantment with the Castro regime.

The decision early this month of the Castelo Branco government in Brasilia was not unexpected. No sooner had the Goulart government been overthrown after the April 1 revolution than speculation arose in Brazil, not so much on whether Brazil would break with Cuba, but when it would do so.

Brazilians in the new revolutionary government charge that the nation was heading toward its own "Cubanization" under President Goulart and that Cuba was helping significantly in this effort.

U.S. Lead Followed

For several years since the United States Government severed relations with Cuba in December, 1960, Latin-American nations have one by one followed suit. But Brazil and Mexico were significant holdouts in this trend.

There were obvious reasons in both cases.

As for Brazil, the nation was under the leadership of both Jânio Quadros and João Goulart, who argued that Brazil must have an independent foreign policy. Both Presidents Quadros and Goulart maintained friendly ties with Cuba and on several occasions feted Cuban officials passing through Brazil.

Mexico is another case. Traditionally independent and vigorously neutral on such matters, Mexico argues that recognition does not imply agreement with the policies of a nation, but merely indicates that Mexico wants to keep channels of contact open. Mexicans moreover, see advantages in maintaining contact with Cuba.

'Window to Cuba'

"We are, in a way, serving as a window to what is going on in Cuba," comments a Mexican diplomat in Latin America.

Mexico serves as a gateway to Cuba—about the only entry point through which people and cargo can get into Cuba from the Western Hemisphere on a regular basis. (Of course, air flights from Iron Curtain countries and from Spain are possible, as well as ship transportation from various European points.)

Brazil's announcement of its break in relations with Cuba charged the island nation with interfering in the internal affairs of Brazil and also with violating the principles of the Organization of American States (OAS).

This last point was based on the findings of an OAS commission investigating charges of aggression against Cuba made by Venezuela.

The Brazilian announcement said that the Castro regime had exploited its maintenance of relations with Brazil "to enshroud the propaganda activities of its agents to a marked degree." Moreover, the new Brazilian government charged that the ordinary government-to-government activities carried on by diplomatic missions had been replaced by "an inadmissible tie with [Brazilian] minority groups."

The Brazilian statement, in mentioning the Venezuelan charges against Cuba, seemed to advance the Venezuelan effort to get the OAS to impose sanctions against the Castro regime.

Venezuela has asked the OAS to call a special conference of Western Hemisphere foreign ministers to brand Cuba an aggressor nation, under stipulations in the treaty of mutual defense signed in 1948 in Rio de Janeiro.

OAS Called On

The Venezuelan effort also calls on the OAS nations to adopt "defensive efforts" of a mutual nature against the Castro regime.

In its statement announcing the break in relations, the Brazilian government said:

"In identifying itself as Marxist-Leninist, the Cuban government has ipso facto also excluded itself from all participation in the inter-American system. Fidel Castro, outside of demonstrating a lack of interest in reincorporating his nation within the fraternity of free American nations, has steadily alienated the countries of the continent and is using all opportunities to continue exporting his subversive doctrines through intense ideological propaganda."

Almost immediately after the triumph of the April 1 revolution, Cuba's Ambassador to Brazil, Raúl Roa Khouri, left Brazil and he was quickly followed by other members of the Cuba embassy staff and their families.

Ambassador Roa is the son of Cuba's vigorously anti-American Foreign Minister, Raúl Roa.

Brazil thus has become the 16th Latin-American nation to break relations with Cuba, leaving only Mexico, Uruguay, Bolivia, and Chile. Chile has agreed to assume responsibility for Brazilian affairs in Cuba—and several anti-Castro Cubans living in asylum in the Brazilian embassy in Havana are being transferred to the Chilean embassy.

Pal 2-01, Brazil/Cuba/Am.
Pal 2-01, Mexico/Cuba/Brazil
Org 1, OAS
Pers, Roa-Khouri, Raoul